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OFFICE OF PETITIONS

BLAKELY SOKOLOFF
TAYLOR & ZAFMAN
1279 OAKMEAD PARKWAY
SUNNYVALE CA 94085-4040

In re Application of :
Metzler :
Application No. 10/716,045 : DECISION
Filed: 17 November, 2003 :
Attorney Docket No. 42P18002 :
:

This is a decision on the petition filed on 23 October and supplemented on 10 December, 2007, and considered as a request to withdraw the holding of abandonment under 37 C.F.R. §1.181.

The petition as considered under 37 C.F.R. §1.181 is **GRANTED**.

BACKGROUND

The record reflects that:

- Petitioner failed to reply timely and properly to the non-final Office action mailed on 8 February 2007, with reply due absent extension of time on or before 8 May, 2007;
- the application went abandoned after midnight 8 May, 2007;
- the Office mailed the Notice of Abandonment on 9 October, 2007;
- on 23 October, 2007, Petitioner filed the instant petition, with an averment of non-receipt and, while there was no a statement in the original petition that a search was made of Petitioner's file and the Office action is not found in the file, nor was there a copy of Petitioner's due-date docket for 8 May, 2007, those omissions were overcome in the supplement; moreover, it is clear from the record that the Office action was mailed not to

the Sunnyvale, California, address (set forth above) associated with the Customer Number (08791) listed on deposit of the application, but to a former (and possibly out-of-date) Lake Oswego, Oregon, street address—which error has been corrected of record—and on at least two occasions mailings to Petitioner from the Office were returned by the U.S. Postal Service as undelivered and are evident in the file—and Petitioner has sought to carry his burdens consistent with the guidance set forth at the Commentary at MPEP §711.03(c).

The availability of applications and application papers online to applicants/practitioners who diligently associate their Customer Number with the respective application(s) now provides an applicant/practitioner on-demand information as to events/transactions in an application. Thus, now if one wishes to know the progress in and/or status of an application or the accuracy of the data therein, one need only look at the file online.

Out of an abundance of caution, Petitioners always are reminded that the filing of a petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.181 does not toll any periods that may be running any action by the Office and a petition seeking relief under the regulation must be filed within two (2) months of the act complained of (see: 37 C.F.R. §1.181(f)), and that those registered to practice and all others who make representations before the Office are reminded to inquire into the underlying facts of representations made to the Office and support averments with the appropriate documentation—since all owe to the Office the continuing duty to disclose.²

STATUTES, REGULATIONS AND ANALYSIS

Congress has authorized the Commissioner to "revive an application if the delay is shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner to have been "unavoidable." 35 U.S.C. §133 (1994).³

The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) and (b) set forth the requirements for a petitioner to revive a previously unavoidably or unintentionally, respectively, abandoned application under this congressional grant of authority.

² See supplement of 17 June, 1999. The Patent and Trademark Office is relying on petitioner's duty of candor and good faith and accepting a statement made by Petitioner. See Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure, 62 Fed. Reg. at 53160 and 53178, 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office at 88 and 103 (responses to comments 64 and 109)(applicant obligated under 37 C.F.R. §10.18 to inquire into the underlying facts and circumstances when providing statements to the Patent and Trademark Office).

See specifically, the regulations at 37 C.F.R. §10.18.

³ 35 U.S.C. §133 provides:

35 U.S.C. §133 Time for prosecuting application.

Upon failure of the applicant to prosecute the application within six months after any action therein, of which notice has been given or mailed to the applicant, or within such shorter time, not less than thirty days, as fixed by the Commissioner in such action, the application shall be regarded as abandoned by the parties thereto, unless it be shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that such delay was unavoidable.

The language of 35 U.S.C. §133 and 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) is clear, unambiguous, and without qualification: the delay in tendering the reply to the outstanding Office action, as well as filing the first petition seeking revival, must have been unavoidable for the reply now to be accepted on petition.⁴

Delays in responding properly raise the question whether delays are unavoidable.⁴ Where there is a question whether the delay was unavoidable, Petitioners must meet the burden of establishing that the delay was unavoidable within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. §133 and 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a).⁵

And the Petitioner must be diligent in attending to the matter.⁶ Failure to do so does not constitute the care required under Pratt, and so cannot satisfy the test for diligence and due care.

(By contrast, unintentional delays are those that do not satisfy the very strict statutory and regulatory requirements of unavoidable delay, and also, by definition, are not intentional.⁷)

Allegations as to the Request to Withdraw the Holding of Abandonment

The courts have determined the construct for properly supporting a petition seeking withdrawal of a holding of abandonment.⁸ (See, also: the commentary at MPEP §711.03(c).)

And the regulation requires that relief be sought within two (2) months of the act complained of.

Petitioner appears to have satisfied the showing requirements herein.

CONCLUSION

⁴ See: *Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure; Final Rule Notice*, 62 Fed. Reg. at 53158-59 (October 10, 1997), 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office at 86-87 (October 21, 1997).

⁵ See: In re Application of G, 11 USPQ2d 1378, 1380 (Comm'r Pats. 1989).

⁶ See: Diligence in Filing Petitions to Revive and Petitions to Withdraw the Holding of Abandonment, 1124 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office 33 (March 19, 1991). It was and is Petitioner's burden to exercise diligence in seeking either to have the holding of abandonment withdrawn or the application revived. See 1124 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office supra.

⁷ Therefore, by example, an unintentional delay in the reply might occur if the reply and transmittal form are to be prepared for shipment by the US Postal Service, but other pressing matters distract one's attention and the mail is not timely deposited for shipment.

⁸ See: Delgar v. Schulyer, 172 USPQ 513 (D.D.C. 1971).

Application No. 10/716,045

The petition as considered under 37 C.F.R. §1.181 is granted and 9 October, 2007, Notice of Abandonment is vacated.

The instant application is released to Technology Center AU 2617 for further processing in due course.

While telephone inquiries regarding this decision may be directed to the undersigned at (571) 272-3214, it is noted that all practice before the Office is in writing (see: 37 C.F.R. §1.2⁹) and the proper authority for action on any matter in this regard are the statutes (35 U.S.C.), regulations (37 C.F.R.) and the commentary on policy (MPEP). Therefore, no telephone discussion may be controlling or considered authority for Petitioner's action(s).



John J. Gillon, Jr.
Senior Attorney
Office of Petitions

⁹ The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.2 provide:

§1.2 Business to be transacted in writing.

All business with the Patent and Trademark Office should be transacted in writing. The personal attendance of applicants or their attorneys or agents at the Patent and Trademark Office is unnecessary. The action of the Patent and Trademark Office will be based exclusively on the written record in the Office. No attention will be paid to any alleged oral promise, stipulation, or understanding in relation to which there is disagreement or doubt.